E 207
.M85
M84
Copy 1

"Where to hide myself—from myself."

THE MOULTRIE MONTAGUE LETTERS

1781

Some Related Matters

The Keowee Courier Presses,
Walhalla, S. C.
1904.

Class E 207

Book .M85M84

PRESENTED BY

"Where to hide myself—from myself."

THE MOULTRIE MONTAGUE LETTERS

1781

Some Related Matters

E302
.M58M3

This historic correspondence is reprinted in this permanent form, for the use of the members of the Massachusetts Historical Society, by the Hon. William Ashmead Courtenay, LL. D., of South Carolina, a corresponding member of the Society.

The edition consists of two hundred copies.

Gift
Hon. Wm. A. Courtenay
10 M

WILLIAM MOULTRIE. 1730–1805

A native and resident of Charleston, S. C.
Colonel Commanding Fort Sullivan June 28, 1776.
Defeating decisively Sir Peter Parker's British Fleet.
Major General U. S. A. in the War of Independence.
Governor of South Carolina, 1785-87 — 1794-96.

The Moultrie-Montague Correspondence.

Charlestown, February 9th, 1781.

Dear Sir:

It is a long time since I have had the pleasure of seeing you, but the length of the time has not effaced the civilities and marks of friendship I received from you. I wish much to see you; you know I have again returned to this country for a short time.

If it is agreeable to you, I will either call upon you or be glad to see you here, at No. 57, Old Church street.

I send this by my old servant, Fisher.

Your sincere friend,

Charles Montague.

Gen. Moultrie.

* * *

March 11th, 1781.

Sir:

A sincere wish to promote what may be to your advantage induces me now to write, and the freedom with which we have often conversed makes me hope you will not take amiss what I say. My own principles, respecting the commencement of this unfortunate war, are well known to you, and, of course, you can

conceive what I mention is out of friendship. You have now fought bravely in the cause of your country for many years, and, in my opinion, fulfilled the duty every individual owes to it. You have had your share of hardships and difficulties, and if the contest is still to be continued, younger hands should now take the toil from you. You have now a fair opening of quitting that service, with honor and reputation to yourself, by going to Jamaica with me. The world will readily attribute it to the known friendship that has subsisted between us, and by quitting this country for a short time you would avoid any disagreeable conversations, and might return at leisure, to take possession of your estates for yourself and family.

The regiment I am going to command, the only proof I can give you of my sincerity is, that I will quit that command to you with pleasure, and serve under you. I earnestly wish I could be the instrument to effect what I propose, as I think it would be a great means towards promoting that reconciliation we all wish for. A thousand circumstances concur to make this a proper period for you to embrace; our old acquaintance; my having been formerly Governor of this Province; the interest I have with present commanders.

I give you my honor, what I write is entirely unknown to the Commandant, or to any one else; so shall your answer be, if you favor me with one. Think well of me.

Yours sincerely,

Charles Montague.

Gen. Moultrie.

To Lord Charles Montague:

Haddrell's Point, March 12th, 1781.

My Lord:

I received yours, this morning, by Fisher. I thank you for your wish to promote my advantage, but am much surprised at your proposition. I flattered myself I stood in a more favorable light with you. I shall write with the same freedom with which we used to converse, and doubt not, you will receive it with the same candor. I have often heard you express your sentiments respecting this unfortunate war, when you thought the Americans injured, but am now astonished to find you taking an active part against them. Though not fighting particularly on the continent, yet seducing their soldiers away, to enlist in the British service, is nearly similar.

My Lord, you are pleased to compliment me with having fought bravely in my country's cause for many years, and, in your opinion, fulfilled the duty every individual owes it; but I differ very widely with you in thinking that I have discharged my duty to my country, while it is still deluged with blood and overrun with British troops, who exercise the most savage cruelties. When I entered into this contest, I did it with the most mature deliberation, and with a determined resolution to risk my life and fortune in the cause. The hardships I have gone through I look back upon with the greatest pleasure and honor to myself. I shall continue to go on as I have begun, that my example may encourage the youth of America to stand

forth in defence of their rights and liberties. You call upon me now, and tell me I have a fair opening of quitting that service with honor and reputation to myself by going with you to Jamaica. Good God! Is it possible that such an idea could arise in the breast of a man of honor? I am sorry you should imagine I have so little regard for my own reputation as to listen to such dishonorable proposals. Would you wish to have that man whom you have honored with your friendship play the traitor? Surely not. You say, by quitting this country for a short time I might avoid disagreeable conversations, and might return at my own leisure and take possession of my estates for myself and family, but you have forgot to tell me how I am to get rid of the feelings of an injured honest heart, and where to hide myself from myself. Could I be guilty of so much baseness I should hate myself and shun mankind. This would be a fatal exchange from my present position, with an easy and approved conscience of having done my duty, and conducted myself as a man of honor.

My Lord, I am sorry to observe, that I feel your friendship much abated, or you would not endeavor to prevail upon me to act so base a part. You earnestly wish you could bring it about, as you think it will be the means of bringing about that reconciliation we all wish for. I wish for a reconciliation as much as any man, but only upon honorable terms. The repossessing my estates, the offer of the command of your regiment, and the honor you propose of serving under me,

are paltry considerations to the loss of my reputation. No, not the fee simple of that valuable island of Jamaica should induce me to part with my integrity.

My Lord, as you have made one proposal, give me leave to make another, which will be more honorable to us both: As you have an interest with your commanders, I would have you propose the withdrawing of the British troops from the Continent of America, allow the independence, and propose a peace. This being done, I will use my interest with my commanders, to accept of the terms, and allow Great Britain a free trade with America.

My Lord, I could make one proposal, but my situation as a prisoner circumscribes me within certain bounds. I must, therefore, conclude with allowing you the free liberty to make what use of this you may think proper. Think better of me.

I am, my Lord,

Your lordship's most obedient,

Humble servant,

Wm. Moultrie.

In republishing this noted correspondence, the record of this distinguished soldier and model citizen, may well be recalled in the present generation. It is contained in his epitaph on the mural tablet in St. Philips church, Charleston, S. C., erected by "the State Society of the Cincinnati of South Carolina."

At his lamented death, in 1805, there were many survivors of the War for Independence, men who had shared with him, the perils of the contest, and who had,

later, listened to his wise advice in the Councils of the Union he had helped to found. As this heartfelt tribute is nowhere printed, in accessible form, it may well be included in this permanent record, and is accordingly submitted to the Society, for which, the letters are being published.

The tablet was originally erected, soon after his death, in the old Colonial Church of St. Philips, (1711-23.) The celebrated Edmund Burke, speaking of it, says: "It is spacious, executed in a very handsome taste, exceeding anything of that kind, which we have in America."

It was destroyed by fire in 1835, and rebuilt on the original site soon after, when the "Cincinnati" renewed the Tablet and Epitaph, and it is still preserved at this writing.

28th June, 1904.

SACRED TO THE MEMORY
OF
MAJOR GENERAL WILLIAM MOULTRIE

Who by his intrepidity and good conduct on the 28th June, 1776, gained with his Regiment the first complete victory achieved by America over the forces of Britain, preserving Charleston from capture, giving confidence to the Union, and showing that the boasted Navy of England was no longer invincible.

Who in 1778 saved Beaufort from capture, by gallantly displaying his faithful band of Militia in the open field, discomforting an equal number of British Regulars, and proving the superiority of patriotic valor well directed, over the sheltered discipline of despots.

Who in 1779, by his activity and firmness, again rescued his native city, assailed by a formidable British army, thus thrice meriting the mural crown, and

Who, though captured and distressed, rejected with disdain the splendid bribe of Rank and Emolument in the enemy's army, demonstrated that a reverse of fortune, could only add fresh lustre to his laurels.

Though daring in action and inflexible in patriotic principles, he was in society, mild, benevolent and unassuming; no domestic character was more beloved, no friend more cherished.

The "Cincinnati of South Carolina," have dedicated this second monument of their affection and gratitude to their beloved first President.

He died on 27th September, 1805, in the 76th year of his age.

Francis Marion, 1732-95.

His commission as Lieutenant Colonel of the Second South Carolina Regiment bears date September 16th, 1776. His military service was continuous to the end of the war. Escaping from Charleston before its surrender in May, 1780, he was prominent for three years, keeping alive the spirit of liberty and resistance to the British forces, then dominating the State. His partisan corps carried his fame to all parts of the Union.

He died without issue. After three generations an incident occurred, which proved how universally his memory was cherished. About 1890 a storm threw down a tree, which destroyed his original tomb. The Legislature, by a unanimous vote, arranged for a new tomb, from the Treasury of the State. Over his grave now stands a granite sarcophagus of stately proportions and elegant finish, with bronze panels, bearing inscriptions. The first is the original epitaph, the second expresses the opinion of his people after the lapse of a century. As this record is not accessible elsewhere, it is included here, as relating to South Carolina's sacrifices and achievements in the Revolution.

East panel— Sacred to the Memory
of
GENERAL FRANCIS MARION
Who departed this life on the 27th February 1795
in the sixtythird year of his age.
History will recall his worth, and rising generations
Embalm his memory as one of the most distinguished
Patriots and Heroes of the American Revolution,
Which elevated his native Country to
Honor and Independence
And secured to her the blessings of Liberty and Peace.
This Tribute of veneration and gratitude is erected in
Commemoration of the noble and disinterested virtues
Of the citizen and the gallant exploits of the soldier
Who lived without fear and died without reproach.

West panel—
To preserve to posterity this burial place of an honored son
The General Assembly of South Carolina
Replaces the crumbling and broken Tomb, nearly a
century old, with this enduring memorial
cut from her own granite hills.
"Esto perpetua."
1893

WHAT THE HISTORIAN GEORGE BANCROFT SAID AT KING'S MOUNTAIN, SOUTH CAROLINA, OCTOBER, 1855:

"No State may celebrate the great events of the American Revolution with juster pride than South Carolina. At the very beginning of the struggle in

1765, she was the first to adhere to a general union; and to her it is due that the Colonies then met in Congress. When, in 1774, a tyrannical government endeavored by slow torture of starvation to crush Boston into submission, South Carolina opened her granaries of rice and ministered abundantly to its relief. While the sons of the Scottish Covenanters in Mecklenburg were the first to sever the connection with Great Britain, and institute government for themselves, the immediate of the great reform rose within the borders of this State; the victory gained at the Palmetto Fort by Moultrie was the bright and the morning star, which went before the declaration of American independence. Wherever the camp-fires of the emigrant shall light up the forest of the West, wherever the history of our country is honestly told, wherever the struggles of brave men in the cause of humanity are respected, high honor will be rendered to the triumph at King's Mountain and at Cowpens, and to that sad victory at Eutaw Springs, where the voice of exultation is chastened by sorrow for the brave who fell.

* * *

"There is still a stronger reason why the North should give you its sympathy on this occasion. She sent you no aid in the hour of your greatest need. It is a blessed thing to give even a cup of cold water in a right spirit; it was not then possible to give even that. All honor must be awarded to the South, since she was left to herself alone in the hour of her utmost distress."

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 011 711 356 5